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CONSTITUTION

OF THE

Associated Charities of Boston,

ADOPTED BY THE SOCIETY,

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9TH, 1879.

PREFACE.

THE need of associating the charities of Boston grows out of the fact that in a large city so many agencies, beside countless benevolent individuals, are at work on the same ground.

If any gaps are left, suffering fails to find relief. If several visitors go in at the same door, relief may be excessive, and cause a waste of money and of visitors' time, and often grave harm by pauperizing the recipient and his family, and perhaps some of the neighbors.

All these evils can be avoided if the charities will unite in working in coöperation, giving and getting information of all relief. This will enable each society, and probably each person, to lessen the field of their work, and to make their work more thorough. Both time and money can be saved. The four essentials of a sound charitable system are investigation, relief, instruction, and graduation. Any charity which only gives relief, without investigation, often does harm; even with investigation, mere relief falls far short of what the strong owe to the weak. But where instruction and counsel and cheer and courage are added, and can lift up any who are down, and train them in ways making self-support possible, charitable work becomes efficient for good. As soon as possible, make them find, or help them to find legitimate work, and become independent, and so graduate from the rolls of charity. This is the great consummation, and, when possible, makes charitable work complete and very happy.

In general, charity has been content to investigate and relieve. But so many poor persons, from vice, bad habits, hereditary degradation, want of training or of self-discipline, have fallen so low that this treatment no longer suffices. Many of them learn to live on

relief and like it. They must be lifted up out of the slough and pushed on to firm land. Every reason, even economy, concurs that it is wise to raise them into self-support, and then insist on their leaving the lists of those who get aid.

Instruction is often worth more than relief. The numerous sewing societies in Boston, and the countless ladies who work in them, have it in their power to increase tenfold the value of their help to the poor, by adding system and thoroughness to their relief. Too often they go on paying high prices for poor work, luring women on to their rolls, when their great aim should be, besides the pay for work, to give instruction in sewing, so that the women may learn to improve and be able to get steady legitimate work. If the sewing is badly done, have it done over, teaching them, in the sewing society or elsewhere. Make the sewing also conditional on neatness of person, of rooms, and of children. Both men and women should likewise be instructed for domestic service and all other lucrative employments, and the young be early inspired with an ambition to earn their own living, as the only sure path to comfort and competence.

THE AIM OF THIS SOCIETY IS TO RAISE THE NEEDY ABOVE THE NEED OF RELIEF, BUT NOT TO GIVE ALMS.

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

ASSOCIATED CHARITIES OF BOSTON.

I. — NAME.

THE name of this society shall be "The Associated Charities of Boston."

II. — OBJECTS.

The objects of this society are: —

To secure the concurrent and harmonious action of the different charities of Boston, in order

To raise the needy above the need of relief, prevent begging and imposition, and diminish pauperism.

To encourage thrift, self-dependence and industry through friendly intercourse, advice and sympathy, and to aid the poor to help themselves rather than to help them by alms.

And to accomplish these objects it is designed —

1. To provide that the case of every applicant for relief shall be thoroughly investigated.

2. To place the results of such investigation at the disposal of the Overseers of the Poor, of charitable societies and agencies, and of private persons of benevolence.

3. To obtain employment if possible; if not, to obtain, so far as necessary, suitable assistance for every deserving applicant, from public authorities, charitable agencies, or benevolent individuals.

4. To make all relief, either by alms or charitable work, conditional upon good conduct and progress.

5. So that, wherever possible, the needy may *graduate* from the rolls of relief, and their children be prevented from falling into need.

III. — Members.

The members of the society shall consist of all members of the council and of the district conferences, and of all persons who shall have contributed, within a year, not less than $5, or at any time not less than $50, to its funds. The connection of any association with this society shall be determined by such association and by the council.

IV. — Meetings.

The annual meeting of the society shall be held on the second Thursday in November, and special meetings may be called by the president or any two members of the council.

V. — Council.

The council shall consist of three delegates, including the president and secretary, from each district conference; of three delegates, including the chairman and secretary, from each general charitable association connected with this society; and of such persons, not exceeding fifty in number, as may be elected each year by the council; of the Mayor, the State Superintendent of Indoor Poor, the State Superintendent of Outdoor Poor, and the Inspector of State Charities; of three Overseers of the Poor, of one Director of the Public Institutions, of one of the Police Commissioners, and a Trustee of the City Hospital, appointed by those bodies respectively; of the Superintendent of Police and the City Physician.

VI. — Executive Committee of the Council.

There shall be an executive committee of the council, consisting of the president, two secretaries, the treasurer, and seven members of the council, all of whom the council shall elect at its first meeting after the annual meeting of the society, or at an adjournment thereof. These shall be *ex officio* members of the council, and shall hold their offices for one year, or until their successors are chosen; and any vacancy occurring in said offices shall be filled by the

council. The Chairman of the Board of Overseers of the Poor, the President of the Boston Provident Association, the President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the President of the Roxbury Charitable Society, and of such other charitable bodies as the council shall direct, shall be *ex officio* members and vice-presidents of the council and of the executive committee.

This committee shall meet monthly, and whenever called by the president or any two members thereof. Said committee shall exercise all powers of the council, unless the council shall otherwise direct.

VII. — Duties and Powers of the Council.

It shall be the duty of the council to cause a full registry of all applicants for charitable aid, and a record of the aid given them, to be kept; to procure the establishment of district conferences, to give aid and encouragement to such conferences, to exercise a general supervision over them, and to see that full reports from them are promptly made; to prepare instructions as to the duties of district visitors, to control the funds of the society, to take suitable measures for the attainment of the objects of the society, and to make a written report thereon at the annual meeting.

It may adopt such by-laws as it may think proper for its own government and that of the officers and agents of the society, and for the better attainment of the objects thereof, but no by-law shall be adopted or altered, and no election of a member of the council shall be had, except upon notice in the notification of the meeting at which such action is proposed to be taken.

VIII. — District Conferences.

A district conference of the associated charities shall be established in each ward, or other convenient division of the city, which shall be composed of any members of the council and Overseers of the Poor living within the district; of the visitors of the society acting within the district; of all authorized agents or visitors engaged in the relief of the poor within the district, acting under the State Board of Health, Lunacy, and Charity, or Overseers of the

Poor, or any charitable society or church connected with this society; of the Captain of Police of the district; and of such other persons, not exceeding eight in number, as may be elected by the conference.

Each district conference shall hold its annual meeting in the first week in November, and weekly meetings for discussion and distribution of cases. They shall choose a president, vice-presidents, secretaries, and treasurer, and also a delegate to the council, all of whom shall be *ex officio* members of the executive committee; and may adopt any by-laws not inconsistent with this constitution and with the by-laws of the council. It shall, at its annual meetings, appoint an executive committee of not less than five members, and may at any time appoint other members.

IX. — District Executive Committees.

It shall be the duty of the executive committee of a district to see that every application for aid from persons living within the district is thoroughly investigated; to study how applicants for relief can be raised into independence, and to make them self-supporting whenever possible; to obtain aid for deserving applicants, unable to earn support, from the appropriate sources; to organize for these purposes a large corps of visitors, so that only a small number of cases shall be assigned to each volunteer visitor; to see that each case is so assigned, and is attended to and reported on; to see that such reports are made to the central office as the council shall require, and, if so directed by the conference, to establish an office and employ an agent for the district.

Visitors shall not use their position for any purposes of proselytizing.

X. — Amendments.

This constitution may be amended at any meeting of the society, provided that notice of an intention to move an amendment thereto shall have been given in the notification of the meeting at which it is to be acted on.